receive relief supplies and hand them over to Air India for onward shipment. Cheques received for the Prime Minister's Relief Fund are being forwarded to the appropriate authorities. The Embassy also provided assistance to the Indian Community and other in organising a Charity Cultural Show.

Clearance of pending applications for Passports

1572. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large number of passport applications are pending in all the Regional Passport Offices of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, regional office-wise separately and reasons for delay in issuing the passport; and

(c) the steps proposed by Government to clear the pending application?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A passport is normally issued within five weeks (as police verification takes about 4 weeks) provided the application is accurately filled with all the required documents and a clear police verification report has been received. Any application, on which a passport is not issued within five weeks by a Passport Office, where all the requirements have been met is considered pending with the Passport Office. A statement showing the number of applications where passports have not been issued for over five weeks either due to the non-availability of police verification report or awaiting issue at the Passport Offices as on 8 December, 1999 is enclosed in the statement (*See* below)

The main reason for delay in issue of passports is the delay in receipt of police verification reports. The other reason is the increase in volume of work in Passport Offices without a corresponding increase of staff in the Central Passport Organisation. In many cases passports cannot be issued due to receipt of negative or incomplete reports from police authorities, discrepancies in documents submitted by the applicants and lack of response from applicants who are asked to submit additional documents.

(c) Government is constantly endeavouring to eliminate pendencies. A special drive has been launched at all the Passport Offices in the month of November and December to issue passports by 31 December 1999 on all applications received till 15 November 1999, if the documents are complete and a clear police report has been received.

Statement

Applications pending with each Passport Office as on 8 December, 1999*

Sl. No.	Name of Regional Passport Offices	Pending cases	
		Police report awaited	Pending with Passport Office
1	2	3	4
1.	Ahmedabad	2571	6346
2.	Bangalore	7001	2050
3.	Bareilly	5322	11046
4.	Bhopal	2904	—
5.	Bhuvaneshwar	02	150
6.	Calcutta	—	—
7.	Chandigarh	3573	969
8.	Chennai	18424	717
9.	Cochin	—	—
10.	Delhi	4042	2851
11.	Ghaziabad	—	—
12.	Guwahati	1927	64
13.	Hyderabad	14964	—
14.	Jaipur	8880	—
15.	Jallandhar	18702	—
16.	Jammu	2726	30
17.	Kozhikode	6866	3506
18.	Lucknow	10826	5876
19.	Mumbai	385	208
20.	Nagpur	—	—
21.	Panaji	—	—
22.	Patna	1239	1650

1	2	3	4
23.	Pune**	—	6873
24.	Srinagar	—	549
25.	Thane	—	—
26.	Trichy	32906	32665
27.	Trivandrum	535	—
28.	Vishakhapatnam	—	—

*An Application is considered pending only when it is accurately completed without any objection and where a police clearance has been received but on which a passport has not been issued by a Passport Office within five weeks of the application being filed.

#Pending as on 30 November, 1999.

**From opening (June 1999) of passport office up to 15 November, 1999.

Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

State welcome to Pope

†1573. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government extended an offical invitation to the Christian priest Pope to visit India;

(b) if not, whether it was his personal visit;

(c) if not, the reasons for extending State welcome to him; and

(d) the details of extending State welcome to the other heads of State of the world during last five years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) The invitation was to His Holiness Pope John Paul II as the Head of State of the Vatican.

(d) Heads of State and Government, when on a State Visit, are always accorded a ceremonial welcome in accordance with the established Protocol traditions of the Government of India.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.